

Ná'†ÉçÊŸá'†á'„á'>á'†á'...

by mermaidbyheart

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## 1. Chapter 1

\_\*\*a/n: \*\*This story is dedicated to \*\*WhenTheTideComesIn\*\*! She was the one who helped me come up with the idea for it, so thank you so much honey! :\* Go read all her stories, 'cause she's really an amazing author and go read our common story "\*\*\*Achromatic\*\*\*"!\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>01.<strong>

A young attractive woman adjusted herself at her seat, watching as her plane was going slowly down to its destination. She was no longer light blond but with now a caramel shade color. And her once beautiful messy curls were long gone, her hair now being straight and making her look more beautiful than ever. Her ocean-blue eyes were glowing with a mischievous spark.

Three years ago when she left Australia to go to the States she didn't imagine she would be off for so long. Three years ago was the last time she saw and heard of her friends that she shared a common

secret with.

She left the Gold Coast just when her friend Emma Gilbert had finally come back from her travelling around the world. It wasn't as if she'd planned it like that, it just happened. The girls, her three best friends Cleo, Bella and Emma weren't thrilled when she announced her decision to them, but she highly doubted they were that devastated they tried to look like. Even if they were, there was nothing that could've made her change her mind.

Now, however, she was coming back to catch up with everyone again and to tell her friends about the amazing adventures she'd been through, during her time away.

The plane finally landed and most of the passengers rushed to find their luggage. She did too. When she noticed her backpack, she grabbed it and hurried to the exit of the airport.

Once outside, she breathed the fresh air and the smallest of smile, just a twitch of the lips, ran through her face.

She was back.

She was home.

And she was going to stay.

{ \* }

The first place she went was her trailer where she lived with her dad. The airport wasn't far so it took her about twenty minutes to get there. She stood in front of the door and taking a deep breath she pushed it open walking in.

"Dad?" She called in. "Dad are you home?!"

Her father walked out of the other room. Seeing her standing in front of him his face lit up.

"Rikki?! Sweetheart, you're back!"

And he hurried to hug his daughter, before pulling away, taking her hands in his. He took a good look at her. She was wearing a black short dress which along with her now straight, light caramel hair were making her look hot and sexy.

"Look at you, you've become such a beautiful young woman!"

She smiled.

"Thanks, dad!"

She hadn't realized how much she'd missed him until now. She was so happy to see him again.

He waited for her to put down her backpack and pulled her to sit with him outside in the back yard, with the magnificent view of the ocean.

"How was your stay in the States? Did you have fun?" He asked

her.

"Yeah, it was amazing!" She exclaimed with a smile.

They sat out there for a long time. She told her dad about California, how then she decided to go to Miami, then to New York, and how she finally ended up at Chicago. She told him about all her adventures and how much fun she had had. He was a really good listener, something she'd forgotten and that she had truly missed.

"I'm glad you had such a great time!" Her dad smiled. "You have no idea how much I've missed you though."

"I've missed you too!" And she chuckled. "And I also missed the old 'Thelma'."

Her dad smiled.

"You probably want to catch up with your friends now." It was a statement.

She nodded smiling.

"Go on then, have fun!"

She grinned giving him a peck on the cheek and headed towards the beach. If there was a place she knew she'd find the girls it was Mako Island.

Making sure no one was watching her she dived into the water.

{ \* }

"Cleo, Emma's at the door!" Kim yelled to her big sister.

"I'm coming!" Cleo replied.

Kim walked away upstairs and Cleo ran down to the door. She herself wasn't really in a mood, but she was surprised to see Emma so angry and upset.

"Em, what happened?!" The brunette asked softly, pulling her inside and leading her to the couch.

"One word. \_Sophie\_."

"What did she do again?"

"She's not willing to give a break to anyone until the wedding's over."

"Oh." Cleo said and rubbed her back. "Well, I can help you if you want. I'll do whatever she needs to be done so you could take a break and get some rest."

"Really?!" Emma gave her a tired smile.

"Of course!" Cleo nodded.

"I still can't believe it you know?!" Emma said bitterly with a flame of frustration in her eyes.

"Can't assume what?!"

"Everything that's happening to us! And this whole wedding thing!" Her voice gave up all the hurt she felt inside.

"I know, me too." Cleo said sympathetically.

Her heart ached too, but she had learnt not to let it get to her brain. She hesitated whether to add something else, but she changed her mind. Instead she just simply shrugged it off as usual.

"We'll be ok, you'll see. We always are and we will be again."

Emma wasn't so convinced but nodded anyway.

"I wish Ash was here, you know." She said. "You have Lewis and Bella has Will. I wish I had Ash here with me."

"I know." The brunette told her gently.

Suddenly her phone started ringing. She reached to take it and saw it was Bella.

"Hi, Bella." She said picking up.

"Cleo, call Emma and meet me at the moon pool, now!"

"Why? Bella what's going on, is everything ok?!" Cleo started panicking.

"Please do what I say and hurry. I'll explain everything there!"

"Ok, ok, Emma's here with me. We're on our way."

And they hung up. Cleo frowned.

"Bella wants us to meet her at the moon pool." She told Emma.

"What? Now?!"

"Yes. And it sounded like an emergency."

"Ok." Emma nodded. "Let's go then."

The two girls left Cleo's house going to the beach. They dived in heading straight to the moon pool. When they arrived Bella was already there.

"Bella, what's going on, why you wanted to meet us so urgently?!" Cleo asked.

"I was heading to the office to tell Sophie I was done with my tasks. It was then when I accidentally overheard her talking to someone."

"So?!" Emma asked confused.

"She was talking to a \_marine biologist\_."

"Could you make out if it was male or female?" Cleo asked trying not to panic.

"It was a woman." Bella said.

Both Emma and Cleo's hearts fell. Their worst fears had just been confirmed.

"We're \_screwed\_." Emma breathed.

The other two nodded.

"Big time."

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Rikki took her time wandering around in the water. She played with some dolphins, admired the reef, teased some sharks with her powers and finally after what were probably two hours she headed to the moon pool.

When she surfaced there she felt something was different. The place was just like she remembered it before she left three years ago, yet something felt wrong. She had some strange gut feeling inside that was telling her danger was about to come.

She stayed there for an hour when she finally decided to leave and go search for her friends. She swam out heading to the mainland.

Rikki pulled out at Lewis' old fishing spot and dried off quickly. She smiled as the memories floated before her eyes and headed towards "Rikki's" thinking if the girls weren't at the moon pool she might find them there.

When she reached the caf   however she was more than surprised of what she found inside.

The whole inner place was redecorated and all the tables were covered with white and red roses. It looked like everyone was preparing hard for something.

Rikki recognized one of the waitresses and walked over to her.

"Excuse me, what's going on here?"

The waitress turned to look at her. At first she didn't recognize her but then she gasped and covered her mouth with her hand.

"Miss Chadwick!" She gulped. "I don't think I'm the person who should tell you this, but...Mr Bennett's getting married."

"What?!"

Rikki couldn't hide the shock that ran all over her face.

"Who's the bride?" She asked though she somehow already knew the

answer.

"\_Me\_." A voice behind her responded.

Rikki turned around in a flash.

"Sophie." She said between her teeth and clenched her hand into a fist.

"Well, well, well, look who's back at the Gold Coast!" The read-head gave her a devious smirk.

"The invitations are sent, so you can -" Zane froze on his way inside the cafe, with his phone still in his hand.

"\_Rikki\_?!" He breathed.

Rikki's heart fastened. She didn't expect to see Zane so soon after her return, least of all under circumstances like these ones. What's more all the feelings for him she thought she'd forgotten suddenly floated back on the surface threatening to burst out.

Looking right into his big, brown eyes Rikki couldn't help but think how much he had changed, yet however was still the same old Zane she had fallen for.

His hair was way shorter now. He was a bit more muscular and even a bit more thinner than before. That along with the manly mature face he had was making him even more hot than before. Not to mention he was wearing his favourite leather jacket, black t-shirt and black pants.

Yet he hadn't change that much and he still was the Zane Bennett Rikki remembered.

She finally relaxed her fist.

Zane's eyes were focused on her crystal-blue orbits, his mouth slightly opened. Could it be that after all that time she was finally back?!

His look travelled all over her. He noticed her hair was straight and with light caramel shade. Her face was now more feminine and that in combination with her dress was making her look breathtaking.

Zane felt a sudden urge to take her in his hands, pull her to himself and kiss her passionately. His love for her suddenly rushed through his veins. He loved her so much that it hurt so bad. He thought he had finally moved on from her, but in that one moment, looking straight into his so painfully familiar blue eyes he realized it was impossible to stop his feelings and that he would always, always love her.

"I heard you're getting married." She said casually, totally ignoring Sophie as if she wasn't there.

His heart fell when she said that. He wished she could never learn about what he was about to do, because he knew it would mean really the end of them and that was the least he wanted to ever happen.

"Congratulations."

And just like that, she \_left\_.

{ \* }

"Don't you see what's going on?! She manipulates and uses us, and now she's going to expose us! We \_can't\_ let her do that!" Emma reasoned.

The three girls were now at The boatshed with Will and Lewis.

"I don't think we have any other choice." Cleo protested.

"Emma's right Cleo." Bella told her. "Sophie's just a manipulative..well you know what (she wanted to say something very bad, but she held it back because of Will) and we can't let her control us."

"You don't know what we had to go through with that marine biologist last time, Bella." Cleo said bitterly.

Lewis who was sitting next to her looked away guiltily, but she held his hand tight.

"If it wasn't for Lewis and Zane we would've been dissected or something!" Cleo finished sounding desperate.

"I can try to talk Sophie out of this." Will suggested. "It won't be easy, but I can at least try. I'm her brother she'll have to listen to me."

"No, Will." Bella shook her head looking at him. "Thank you for trying to help, but you can't do that."

"Why not?" He asked a bit defensively.

"Because she would start asking questions. How are you going to explain you've learned for her plans in the first place?! She'll find out it was me who had overheard her."

Silence came into the room.

"I wish..." Cleo began, but was interrupted by a loud knock on the door.

"Are you expecting someone?" Bella whispered to Will.

He shook his head in response then slowly walked to the door.

"Who is it?" He asked.

"It's me." They heard a familiar voice from outside.

Will opened the door.

"What are you doing here, Zane?"

"Not very friendly." Zane commented walking in.

Will closed the door crossing his hands in front of his chest.

"What do you want?"

Zane looked around checking out everyone.

"Where is she? I want to talk to her."

"My sister's not here at the moment, Zane."

"\_Very clever\_, Will. \_Really\_. You know who I'm talking about, so where \_is\_ she?"

"Whoever is it you're looking for, Zane..." Will opened the door showing the exit to Zane, "...\_she isn't\_ here."

Zane's eyes travelled around everyone's faces. It seemed they really didn't know who he was talking about.

"Don't you know?" He asked them his eyebrows lifted high.

"Know \_what\_, Zane?!" Emma asked getting really annoyed.

"Rikki's \_back\_."

## 2. Chapter 2

\*\*02.\*\*

She left the cafe, just like that, rushing past Zane with so much emotions storming inside her. She couldn't believe he had given her up so easily. After all he was \_the one\_ running after her, \_begging\_ her not to leave him. And now what?! He had just forgotten about all of that and he was marrying a woman worse than the devil itself?! It didn't make any sense at all.

But if he'd moved on, she was going to move on from him too. Funny that, before she saw him, she thought she \_already\_ \_had\_.

Walking out she breathed the fresh air and since she didn't feel like going anywhere else she simply walked to the nearest beach, diving in. For a moment she considered going to Mako. If anything, it was her home. Her \_real\_ home that she'd missed so much while being away. Not that the trailer she lived in with her dad wasn't home for her too. It \_was\_ a home, her adolescent home, but the moon pool was just \_different\_.

Given that she was a strong, beautiful, independent woman and above all - a loner, this place, Mako Island, meant \_everything\_ for her. The walks beneath the tropical trees, the swims to the moon pool, the fact this place wasn't exactly from the Earth, but was made of a \_moon\_ rock...all of that was reflecting her \_true\_ identity.

Identity of something \_not quite\_ human, identity of something... \_magical\_.

This time however, she didn't want to go to the moon pool. This time



she preferred going further from the island, exploring the beautiful, peaceful waters.

Three years ago, before leaving for America, Rikki had tried talking Cleo, Bella and even Emma when she came back, to go do some exploring of the ocean together. All three of them had put down her offer. Cleo had simply been scared even though she wouldn't admit it, Bella had stated it was pointless and dangerous and Emma had said she was busy. Rikki, however, wasn't surprised. She knew the girls better than anyone else, and she'd expected them to refuse.

But she wasn't like them. She was strong, and brave and curious. She was eager for new adventures. And that, actually, was one of the reasons she had left the Gold Coast to go travelling around the States.

She sped through the waves, rushing past Mako Island and continuing further. At first it didn't seem much different. But then a magnificent view came to her sight; wherever she could look, she could see the reef under her and so many sea creatures surrounding her. Hundreds of different species in all size and color. It was breathtaking.

Rikki swam and swam for hours, admiring the scenery surrounding her, when she felt strange. She felt like someone was watching her and spun around, but didn't see anything.

Reluctantly she decided to swim back to the land. Taking one last look, she swam away.

{ \* }

Cleo was on Lewis' secret fishing spot, sitting on one of the rocks and deep in her thoughts. She was tense and she jumped out even of the most quiet sound.

Ever since Zane told them Rikki was back, Cleo felt scared. Scared of what might happen if she accidentally runs at her. She wondered if she'd have the strength to just carry on walking, ignoring her, or if she'd break down, and screw up everything.

She knew Bella and Emma were stronger than her. They would walk away with their heads up, but Cleo couldn't.

She feared she might fail, and that thought terrified her more than anything else, because if she did she'd fail not only herself, but her best and dearest friends as well. What's more it was her fault they were in this situation in the first place.

"Cleo?!" She heard someone calling her. "\_Cleo\_!"

She turned to look at the source of the voice.

"Cleo, I've been looking for you for ages!"

"I'm sorry." She said. "I needed time to think."

"Are you ok?!" He took her hand in his. "You know you can tell me anything!"

"I know, Lewis." She put her head on his shoulder feeling the slightest bit better now he was there with her. "I know."

"Is this about \_her\_?!"

He felt her nod.

"I can't do this Lewis. I thought I can, I thought I was strong enough, but...I'm not so sure anymore..." Her eyes filled with wetness.

He gently lifted her head with his hand, so she could look at him.

"You can do it, Cleo. You have enough strength in yourself and I believe in you!" And he leaned to kiss her.

When they released she gave him a weak smile. "I love you."

"And I love you too."

She put her head on his shoulder again, both of them staring beyond the horizon. A quiet tear rolled down Cleo's cheek.

{ \* }

"I still can't believe we got ourselves in such a huge mess." Bella said.

"I know, me too." Will nodded. "But we can go through it. \_Together\_." He smiled to her.

They were on the boatshed sitting on Will's bed. Bella was holding her head with her hands, her elbows rested on her legs. Will had his hand on her back, sliding it up and down, trying to comfort her.

"I still can't believe my own sister is capable of doing something like this! It's like I never really knew her!"

Bella dropped one of her hands to take his. "I'm glad you're not like her, you know?! It's a really good thing you two are so different."

He nodded slightly, then he suddenly smiled. "She was so different when we were kids. She was always smiling and was happy and we were inseparable." His eyes filled with sadness. "How did everything changed so much so quickly?!" He said more to himself than to her.

She put her head on his shoulder. "I wish I could answer that. But I've been myself exactly the same thing about all of our lives and I can't find the answer." She told him softly.

He nodded and closed his eyes. "I wish there was a way to change things and bring them back to normal." He sighed.

All of a sudden she shot her head up. Her eyes widened. "That's it! Will, this is it! All we need is to make a wish!"

He gave her a weird look. "What? Are you talking about

wishgiving?!"

"Yes!" She exclaimed. "Don't you remember what Cleo once told us? About Lewis finding a book with a fungus that grant wishes when put on a real mermaid?! All we need is to find the recipee for it and to wish things to be back what they were three years ago!"

Will thought over her words for a moment. He was a bit sceptical about it, but four years ago he didn't believe in mermaids either. What's more it would hurt to try. "Do you think it will work?"

"I don't see why not." Bella answered. "Unless you think it's a waste of time."

"No, I don't. Actually I really like your idea."

Bella smiled. "Really?"

"Really." He smiled back.

"I'm going to call Cleo, Lewis and Emma and tell them about the plan." She said taking out her phone.

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Zane was in the office, trying to do some paper work, trying to distract himself from the whole wedding thing. He did it easily enough, because his mind was occupied with what happened earlier.

Seeing her again, standing before him made his feelings and emotions an explosive mixture of love, happiness, amusement, anxiousness, passion, desire and so much more. He wasn't prepared for seeing her after so much time, but still, he felt he'd been waiting for this moment ever since she'd left the Gold Coast. When she casually congratulated him and ran out, he wanted to chase after her, but he knew better than do it in front of the read-head and besides he knew Rikki would want to be alone.

However he couldn't help but ask himself questions like "\_What does her return mean\_", "\_Is it a sign for him to call off the wedding\_" and so much more. He actually considered the last one, but he knew if did it, he'd put people's lives in danger, including Rikki's and that he couldn't risk to ever happen.

He sighed and looked outside the window. He wished things were different. He wished she hadn't come back, because that way she would've been safe. But most of all he wished she never left in the first place.

Zane stood off and left the office. He needed to get away from the cafe for a while.

He walked with hours founding himself at one of the more distant beaches. There weren't any other people except a young couple walking close to the water and an old man sitting on the sand. Zane stared at the couple; the boy had one of his hands wrapped around the girls waist and was holding an ice-cream with the other. The girl was eating ice-cream too and was laughing at something her boyfriend had just said. Zane remembered the time that he could carelessly share

with Rikki, when he could just hold her in his arms and kiss her not caring about anything else.

He sighed and moved his eyes to the ocean. The water was sparkling and looked so tempting under the rays of the sun. A weak smile ran through his face at the thought Rikki might be out there somewhere. He carried on further and when he moved his eyes he suddenly froze; there she was a few meters away, blue eyes far away beyond the horizon and so beautiful that it made his heart ache.

He hesitated; should he go and talk to her or should he just leave?! And what possibly could he tell her without letting her know how he truly felt?! While he was debating on what to do something caught his attention. She had closed her eyes and when she opened them again one small tear rolled down her face. She lifted her hand and quickly brushed it, but Zane's eyes were wide open, him staring shocked and asking himself "\_Since when does Rikki \_cry?!". He wondered if he was the reason for her tears and that thought killed him; least of anything did he want to cause her any pain.

He was just going to walk over to Rikki, when he saw someone else reaching her. He saw him smirk and say a few words with her before she leaned to whisper something in his ear. He grinned and gave her a thumbs up, then walked away. Zane blinked stunned before seeing her walk away too in the opposite direction.

For a moment he wanted to hurry after her, but eventually he decided against it.

{ \* }

Emma was in her room, laying on her bed. "\_Don't you know?! Rikki's back.\_" The words were echoing in her head. She shut her eyes close and took a deep breath. "Why now?!" She whispered and opened her eyes again. She turned her head to look at the photo oh her, Rikki and Cleo on her nightstand. So many memories floated back, making her eyes fill with wetness.

"Em?!" She heard a knock and her mother's voice. "Darling, you have a visitor."

"I don't want to see anyone right now, mom." She replied.

"What?! Not even me?" A familiar voice came from the door of her room, making her heart fasten.

She spun around in a heartbeat and her eyes widened. "Ash?!" She whispered and jumped up from her bed, mentally cursing herself for looking like a mess. "What are you doing here?!" She exclaimed leaning for a hug.

"I just got back and I wanted to surprise you." He smiled.

When they released Emma grinned. "Congratulations then. You really surprised me." And she quickly ran her hands through her hair trying to fix it. "I'm sorry for the mess (that actually was nothing more but her jacket on her bed and her socks on the floor), I just didn't expect guests." And she blushed slightly.

"You call that a \_mess\_?!" He laughed pointing at her room. "I've

never seen a tidier room in my life!"

She chuckled and blushed again.

"So...how's the things with your", he lowered his voice, "\_mermaid\_club?"

Her smiled disappeared. Suddenly her contempt of his return was replaced by everything that she'd been thinking before he came. "Not very well, but still manageable." \_Lie\_. She knew she and the girls would never be able to manage it if things got worse and they were just bound to.

"Are you sure?" He lifted his eyebrows looking straight into her eyes.

"Positive." She nodded.

He sighed, but didn't bring up the topic again. He knew Emma and he knew from past experience she just needed more time to opened up about something so private. That's why he decided to let it go and didn't mention it again.

They spent the rest of the day at Emma's place, catching up with each other's lives. Or more precisely - Emma catching up with Ash'. She found she didn't have so much to tell him if she didn't want to let him know what exactly was going on with her and the girls. And it wasn't if she didn't want to. She just couldn't risk his life too.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>an:\*\* \_This was Chapter 2. I hope you liked it. Don't forget to review! :-) Best wishes! xXx\_

### 3. Chapter 3

\*\*03.\*\*

"I can't find that recipe, Bella." Lewis told her. "We lost that book years ago."

"But can't you search for it in the internet, again?!"

"No, I'm sorry."

Bella leant her head down. Emma looked at her sadly and Cleo just sighed. They were now at Cleo's place debating on the book with the magic potions and most of all whether to try to contact Rikki or not.

"We'll figure something out." Lewis sighed.

Suddenly Will's head shot up.

"What if \_I \_go and talk to Rikki?"

The others stared at him. Bella took his hand in his.

"No way, Will, it's too risky, if Sophie finds out - "

"Exactly! She can't do anything to me! I'm her brother and I don't have a secret to protect. She won't do anything! And this is the only way for us to let Rikki know what's going on without any of you endanger your secret."

"Will, even if she can't do anything to her brother, she can do something to us." Cleo sounded almost desperate.

"But -"

"Cleo's right." Emma interrupted them. "Right now it's way too risky to try and talk to Rikki. Sophie's too powerful." She walked to the window and looked outside.

"\_Hell\_, what is it we actually \_can \_do?!" Bella groaned exhaustedly and let her head lean back to the wall. "I hate this whole situation. It's too much to handle and I feel like it's getting out of control. I'm so tired of it, already!"

She closed her eyes for a moment and when she opened them again she looked straight at Emma and Cleo, wetness sparkling in the depths of her blue orbits. "I miss her."

Cleo walked at her direction, taking the chair next to her.

"Me too, Bella." She whispered with tears in her eyes as well. "Me too." And she leaned to hug her. Bella hugged her with her left hand, but with her right she motioned Emma to join them. The other blond nodded and walked towards the two girls wrapping her hands around them.

"We can go through this." Emma said confidently, the three of them still wrapped up in the tight hug. "I'm \_sure\_ we can."

The two boys watched the girls' hug and admired their strength and the close bond they had. Still, they knew they had to do something to help them and to warn Rikki of the whole situation. Will moved closer to Lewis to whisper in his ear, "We have to do something to help them. We can't just sit around and do nothing."

"Yes, we have." The other boy nodded. "I wish I knew what."

"I think I have an idea." Will whispered again. His eyes met Lewis' and they both could see the confidence in the other. "But the girls don't need to know..."

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Sophie was in Zane's office. She was trying on her wedding dress and was smiling widely against the mirror.

Finally she had achieved her goals. She was marrying Zane and she was going to manage the cafe with him. Now that there were hours until the wedding Sophie felt nothing can stop her. She felt invincible.

Still there was something that she couldn't stop thinking about. That horrifying woman that had decided to come back just now of all time and not only that but looking better than ever. Without her blond

curls and her light caramel-colored hair instead, and now feminine face, she was looking better than ever and more beautiful than Sophie could even dream of to be. And even though she would never admit it, she hated even the bare thought, but Sophie felt scared. She knew Zane still had feelings for that woman and it was a matter of time for them to show up again. And when that happened she had no idea what she'd do. But she was sure of one thing. She would never let them be together. Even if that meant to ruin lives or even kill. Even then.

She sat on Zane's chair breathing heavily and shaking her head to clear her thoughts. She hadn't realized when she had curled her hand into a fist but now she released it again. She let her head fall back and closed her eyes for a second.

When she opened her eyes again she looked down and noticed one of the upper drawers wasn't entirely closed. Her hand reached and pulled it open. She noticed a small framed photo and took it out. When she saw it she felt the urge to throw it against the wall so it could break on millions of pieces. Instead she removed the frame and took a small lighter that was laying on the desk. She lighted it and she made the photo and the flame touch. The photo curved and started cracking in her hand.

She dropped the burning photo in the trash can and stood up to look herself in the mirror.

"Tomorrow night I'll become the one and only Mrs. Zane Bennett. And with you -" She looked down at the photo still in flames. "With you it'll be over once and for all!"

Taking one last glance at her reflection Sophie turned her back to the mirror and marched out of the office.

{ \* }

Rikki walked away from the secluded beach she'd been having a walk and headed back to the town.

She was heading straight to the address he had given to her. He told her he had everything arranged. Now she only needed to make her move.

She wasn't a person who asked for anything. Never in her life she had asked anyone for a favour. Except that time when she had asked Zane to go Mako with her and he had refused because he had a meeting with Sophie that led to a fight between the two.

Yes, Rikki Chadwick was her own person and never asked for anything.

But tonight?! Tonight she was going to make an exception.

She found the building she'd been looking for easily enough. She entered the store and quickly bought what she needed. After she gotten everything she walked out.

She walked for another half an hour until she reached her final destination. She stopped for a second, just letting her eyes travel around the familiar house, then walked around to the back door.

She quickly got changed in the dark, putting up also a wig and some make up. She then packed all her stuff and left them there, next to the back door which was her escape route. Taking a deep breath she walked further into the house.

{ \* }

After his walk Zane went home. He had to get dressed for his bachelor party, but he was absolutely not in a mood.

He went up into his room and got changed, when he heard a knock on the door and his friend's head popped in.

"Are you ready, yet?!"

"Yeah." Zane nodded with a sigh.

"Well come on, then!"

"Wait!" Zane stopped him. "Come in for a sec."

Nate walked in the room, closing the door behind himself.

"What's up?" He asked impatiently.

"I saw you talking to Rikki earlier this evening."

Nate smirked. "So what if I did?! She's not your girlfriend anymore."

And he turned to walk out, but Zane grabbed his arm.

"Stay away from her!"

Nate turned his head to look at him.

"Will you relax?! I don't want anything to do with that ex chick of yours anyway, and besides it's your bachelor night so let's go and have some fun, shall we?!"

And he walked to the door and out of the room.

Zane let out a sigh and Reluctantly followed him downstairs.

There, on the first floor a wild party was going. It was full with strppers dancing with Zane's friends who seemed to be having the time of their lives.

"Great party, mate!" The brunette heard one of his friends shout to him through the loud music.

Zane only nodded and walked on further. He found an empty chair and fell heavily in it. Quickly he was surrounded by a few really beautiful strippers who seemed to know the party was held for him.

Normally he would be more than flattered of all the things those girls were saying and were trying to do to him. But now he didn't know what to feel anymore. One of the girls took off his black



t-shirt and started kissing his chest. He immediately realized he hated it. The only one he ever loved doing that was Rikki. He suddenly pushed the strippers away, some strange anger bubbling inside him. He wanted to go upstairs and hide in the darkness of his room. Nate's voice however made him the center of attention and he missed his chance for escape.

"Now ladies and gentleman here comes the surprise of the evening! A special surprise for our friend here, who after tomorrow will no longer be a free man!"

Nate who said all of that standing up on the breakfast bar, pointed with his hand to the top of the stairs. There was a black haired woman with a suit who as if on cue started dancing. Her face was covered by a golden mask, and the black hair was only a wig, but it made her look breathtaking. She was dancing dirty dances, but was doing with such passion, making it look so beautiful. She removed her coat along with her shirt, leaving only a beautiful sparkling top to cover her breasts. Next she removed her pants, leaving her with only black stockings and black bikini on. She danced and danced to the rhythm of "Sweet Dreams". She danced downstairs, finally reaching Zane. He was staring at her, his mouth slightly opened in awe. She started making steps back, never breaking eye contact with him. His friends were applauding enthusiastically and were whistling after her. Still looking straight at Zane's eyes, she motioned him to come with her upstairs. He didn't know why, but he actually obeyed and followed her up. He could hear the laughter of his friends and could feel their envy looks on him.

The mystery stripper led him into his room and when walked in, she pressed him against the door. Zane could feel her warm breath on his face. She reached and removed the mask off her face, pressing her lips roughly against his. Just then and there when their lips connected he made out who she was.

For a moment shock ran through his body only to be replaced by something strong and warm, that threatened to burn his chest.

He put his hand behind her neck, pulling her tight to himself. He then gently broke the kiss.

"What are you doing here?!" He whispered their faces inches away, their noses touching.

"I'm here to ask you something."

"What?"

"Don't marry her."

For a moment he stared at her with shock, then he kissed her passionately, pushing her towards the wall.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>an:\*\* I'm so sorry for the late update everyone! I couldn't update earlier, because my stomach was killing me the whole week, but thankfully I'm a bit better now, so I'll try to update more often! I hope you'll enjoy Chapter 3! R&R! :-)

#### 4. Chapter 4

\*\*04. \*\*

When Rikki woke up the sun was shining brightly through the window and its rays were fondling her pale skin.

She looked around herself and realized she was still in Zane's room and in his bed, but he wasn't there. In the bed next to her she saw a platter with fresh breakfast and a piece of paper. She took the paper and opened it. It was a note from Zane.

\_"Rikki,\_"

\_I'm so sorry, but I can't do what you asked me last night. I also can't tell you why and please, I beg you, don't ask questions and don't try to find out my reasons. I want you to know that last night was the best in my life and I want you to never forget how much you mean to me! One day you'll probably understand why I'm doing what I'm doing. But until then just take care and stay safe, ok?!" \_

\_Love, Zane.\_

\_P.S. I made you some breakfast. I hope you'll like it. :-)\_

Rikki looked up from the note and lowered her hands, curling her fingers around the piece of paper. She felt anger bursting in her veins.

She had come here last night against her will and her sanity, to ask Zane not to marry that evil woman who was worse than the devil himself. And Zane had only used the opportunity to have sex with her again not having even the slightest bit of the intention to do what Rikki had asked him.

She swore to herself she would make Zane sorry for using her momentum state of weakness, and she would never \_ever\_ ask or beg anyone for anything \_again\_.

She slid out of the covers and looked around the room. There were only the clothes she had used last night to trick Zane into following her in his room. In other words - the suit and the black wig.

Rikki sighed and walked over to Zane's drawers. Three years ago before she had broken up with him and before she had gone away to America afterwards, it was only natural habit for her to spend the nights with Zane here in this exact room, so she had left some of her thing in one of his drawers, just in case she decided to stay a bit longer and had to change or use the bathroom. She just hoped he was still keeping her stuff and when she opened the drawer she was pleasantly surprised to find everything was still in there.

The blond pulled out a pair of red short shorts and a black tank top and quickly got dressed. When she turned around to close the drawer however, she noticed something had fallen out when she had taken out her clothes. She bent over to take it and put it back when she realized what it was and her heart fastened; it was a small black velvet box and Rikki knew exactly what was inside of it. Her hand was shaking slightly when she reached and opened it. When she saw the

small sparkling jewel her heart jumped and she couldn't help but gasp quietly; it was the most beautiful ring she had ever seen! Silver, with big, aquamarine stone, it was shining under the rays of the sun.

Her hands were now shaking so much that she almost dropped it down. She quickly closed it again and put it away in drawer. She was swallowing hard because of the shock and because of the memory of a part of conversation her and Zane have once had floated up in her mind.

\_"What's your favourite type of a crystal stone?"\_

\_"Why do you ask?"\_

\_"Because I want to know what should be the stone of the ring I'd use to ask you to marry me one day."\_

\_"Well..you'll have to guess."\_

\_"Come on, just tell me."\_

\_"No. Guess."\_

\_"Ok. My guess is aquamarine because its name reflects your mermaid self and because its color is like the color of the ocean."\_

\_"Correct."\_

\_"What? Really? I was just guessing."\_

\_"And your guess is right. I love the aquamarine stone."\_

\_"Actually you know what I think?! I think your eyes are with the color of aquamarine. They're beautiful and unique and magical."\_

\_"Now you're just trying to make me kiss you, right?!"\_

\_"Is it working?!"\_

\_"No." Rikki smirked while leaning to kiss him.\_

She pushed the drawer close, put the suit and the wig in a plastic bag and marched out of the room. She tried to normalize her breathing while walking downstairs. She found the bag with her stuff exactly where she had left it last night, so she grabbed it and walked out of the house.

She didn't want to stay a second longer. The memories were just \_too many.\_ The pain was \_too much\_.

{ \* }

Lewis and Will were at Lewis' apartment. That way they could plan everything without worrying of being accidentally interrupted or overheard.

Will had asked Lewis some questions and had told him about his plan.

Lewis however had his doubts and didn't exactly agree with the other boy.

"That's ludicrous!" He fumed.

"I can assure you it's brilliant."

"Will, there are too many ways for this plan to become a failure or even worse - a total disaster."

"But it won't. Just trust me on this, ok?!"

Lewis shook his head. It wasn't he didn't trust Will or anything, but he had his reasons of being cautious and he also had a bad feeling of all of that.

"Look, Will, it's not that I don't trust you, but we are taking a really big risk. Not to mention we will put the girls at risk too without them even having the slightest idea."

"Do you think I haven't considered that?! That I haven't considered everything?!"

"I've never said that."

"But that's what you think isn't it?"

"No. But yes. I don't know anymore, I...I hate all that mess."

"Me too." Will nodded and put his hand on Lewis' shoulder. "And that's our only way of putting an end to it."

Lewis sighed and looked in the eyes of the other boy. "Fine. You convinced me. I'm in."

{ \* }

Cleo was still at the Marine park, hanging out around Ronnie's pool when Laurie came to her.

"What are you still doing here?!" He asked her lifting his eyebrows. "You finished like half an hour ago."

"I know. I just...needed to think and hanging out around Ronnie always helps."

"Yeah, he's a real charmer, isn't he?!" Laurie smiled. "The next few days we should prepare him for the show next week. We'll have a special guest attending it."

"Really?! Who?"

"Just some marine biologist, I don't really remember her name."

"Linda Denman." Cleo breathed and her heart fell.

"Yeah, that's her name. How did you know, do you know her?!"

"Yeah, well...sort of. We've...met before." Cleo swallowed hard

trying to compress the memories that floated before her eyes.  
"Laurie, I've got to go, now. See you tomorrow! Bye!" And she ran out of the marina, not waiting for his response.

She just ran and ran not knowing where she was going, when suddenly she collided hard with someone and they both ended up falling on the ground with a loud thud.

"You should watch where you're going!" The other person spat and Cleo could swear that when she heard the voice, she almost stopped breathing.

She lifted her eyes and watched as the woman in front of her stood off the ground fixing her clothes.

It was then when the other woman's eyes fell on the brunette.

"\_Cleo\_?!" She said, her voice a bit shocked. "Where the hell were you? I spent the last few days looking everywhere for you and the others!"

And she stretched her hand to Cleo, but the brunette's big eyes were wide open and filled with panic. She clumsily stood off the ground and made a step away from the other girl, who looked at her stunned.

"Cleo, are you ok?! It's \_me\_, Rikki!"

And the blond made a step towards Cleo but she frantically stepped back. She couldn't.

"Cleo, what the hell is wrong with you?! Talk to me. \_Say\_ something!"

Slowly Cleo's mind took form and her eyes filled with tears.

"For goodness sake, why aren't you talking to me?! Did something happened while I was away? Did you or the others got hurt? Did something happened on Mako?"

The brunette started shaking her head and the tears started rolling down her cheeks.

Rikki was shocked and extremely confused by Cleo's behaviour.

"Look if you don't want to talk here want we can talk at the moon pool."

"\_NO\_!" The brunette suddenly cried with desperation.

"Did something happened to the moon pool? Is that what you are so afraid to tell me?!"

Cleo shook her head. She shouldn't be standing there, face to face with the curly blond.

"Than \_what\_ is it?!" Rikki yelled frustrated. "Just \_tell\_ me!"

Cleo just continued staring at her with so much fear written in her eyes.

"You know what?! I'm going for a swim and if you decide you want to talk to me I'll be at the moon pool!"

With that Rikki turned to walk away, but she felt one soft, warm hand grabbing hers. She spun around; it was Cleo. The brunette was looking a lot more terrified than before a couple of minutes, if that was even possible.

When Rikki turned around to look at her the brunette quickly dropped her hand and backed away.

"Whatever you do, stay away from Mako Island, especially the moon pool. It's not safe out there anymore." She whispered, her voice filled with panic.

Rikki was taken aback by what Cleo had just said.

"What? Why?!"

Cleo now gave her a look that was a mixture of sadness and fear.

"Denman's back." Was all she whispered, before turning around and running away.

{ \* }

Cleo ran into the boatshed, trying to take a breath.

Bella and Emma were there, but there was no sign of Will and Lewis.

The brunette started talking fastly, almost hysterically and it was like should run out of air any minute now.

"Cleo!" Both Emma and Bella shouted over her cries and took her arms leading her to the couch. "Breathe!"

Cleo took a deep breath and started explaining everything again, this time a bit calmer.

"Laurie told me that next week Denman will watch our dolphin show and I freaked out and ran away. But then I..I ran into Rikki and I..I couldn't...she quickly made sense that something was going on and started asking me questions and when I didn't answer she..she told me she'd go to Mako for a swim and I...I couldn't let her and...I told her about D-Denman." Cleo had started now crying and it was a bit harder for Emma and Bella, but they managed to catch her every word.

Emma hugged Cleo, while Bella took the brunette's hands.

"Shh, Cleo, calm down." Emma said to her softly and Bella rubbed Cleo's back.

As if on cue Lewis and Will came bursting through the door. It took them a few seconds to assimilate the scene before them.

Lewis ran to Cleo and Emma moved so he could hug his girlfriend. Will sat down to Bella, taking her hand in his and asking her what has happened.

Emma and Bella told the boys everything Cleo had told them before that.

After receiving the new information, Lewis and Will exchanged hidden looks. They knew they had to act fast and bring their plan into action immediately.

Emma looked at her watch and gasped. "Will, we should've left half an hour ago!"

"What? Why?!"

"For the wedding, remember?!"

Everyone exchanged silent looks. This was just another goddamn thing to go through, but if they knew something it was they didn't have another choice.

{ \* }

Zane was standing in the church dressed in a black suit and a red tie. He had put a fake smile on his face, but inside he was falling apart.

He hated, absolutely loathed that whole situation, this circus he had been dragged into. That devilish woman that after tonight was going to call herself his wife was disgusting him; he couldn't stand her cheesy smiles, high-pitched talking, her whole presence even.

The wedding melody was turned on and here she was walking slowly towards him, looking like a cake in her big, fatty dress. He closed his eyes to take a breath, and not to look at her, when suddenly a whole other image floated before his eyes. Image of the one woman he truly loved with his whole heart lying on his chest, tight in his embrace. He felt his heart ache and pain jolted in his chest.

When he opened his eyes again, Sophie was already standing next to him, waiting for Zane to take her hand. He reached and reluctantly did it. Then they turned their backs to her witnesses, to stand up face to face with the priest.

Everyone were so caught up in their emotions, that they didn't notice a shadow sneaking at the back. A shadow in black, that hid in the darkness of one of the corners and that witnessed the whole ceremony. A shadow that was waiting with breath caught in her throat to see if he will do it. If he will say "I do" and kill the last glimpse of hope that had left to them both.

During the whole ceremony Zane managed to pull a cold, tempted expression on his face and when he heard the priest ask the question he closed his eyes again. He didn't want to do it, but he had no choice. "You're doing it for the love of your life." He reminded himself. He then opened his eyes again and looked at Sophie, then back at the priest and finally nodded. "I do." He said and he felt

his heart break on two.

It was done now and there was no going back. But if that way he would keep her alive and safe, then throwing himself into the hands of misery was all worth it.

He didn't know however, that he had sentenced to misery not only himself, but also a certain someone, who quietly ran out of the church and into the ocean, to dive in and swim off to one of her biggest nightmares.

## 5. Chapter 5

**\*\*Hi, all! I'm sorry for not updating for so long, but I've been really busy with uni. I know this chapter is way too short, but the next one's gonna be really long!\*\***

\* \* \*

><p><strong>05.<strong>

Zane was glad that the wedding ceremony was over. It took everything for him to force himself say "I do", but he did it.

When it was announced that he had to kiss the bride, he squeezed his eyes shut for a moment and then moved his head to take a look at all the guests in the church. Then his eyes fell over to the far right of the hall and he froze; a crested figure was standing there, and even with the topknot on, he could still see the pair of the painfully familiar and most beautiful blue eyes someone could own.

Pain exploded in his chest with enormous strength; it couldn't be.

The figure turned its back to him and quietly ran out of the church.

Zane couldn't think and couldn't feel; his mind was racing fiercely trying to assimilate what just happened.

"Zane?" A voice called out his name, but somehow it sounded distant and quiet. "\_Zane\_?!"

With the greatest effort he had ever made he turned to the source of the voice.

"You have to kiss the bride." Sophie reminded him bitterly.

{ \* }

Rikki sped through the water when she suddenly stopped dead in her tracks, remembering about Denman. She turned around and swam back, a decision forming in the back of her head.

She didn't feel like going home, so she just wandered around for good two and a half hours before she felt a bit tired and decided to head to the direction of her trailer. When she reached it, she slowed her pace and sat down on the porch.



Rikki sat out there for hours, staring at the view of the ocean before her, deep in her thoughts. Words couldn't described what was happening in her heart and in her brain. So much feelings rushed through her, that she felt too overwhelmed.

"\_I should've never come back.\_" She thought.

She wished she was still in Chicago. She had met some really great people there and right now she wished she could be with them.

Suddenly something clicked in her mind.

"\_Whenever you're ready\_."

She reached and pulled out her phone, dialing a number.

"Hello?!" She heard a sleepy voice pick up.

"Hey, it's me."

"Rikki?" The familiar voice sounded shocked and surprised on the other end of the line.

Rikki took a deep breath.

"Do you remember how you told me you'd wait for me until I was ready?"

"Of course."

"I realized I've been ready all this time."

"What? Are you serious?!"

Rikki nodded, then realized he couldn't see her.

"Yes, I am."

She shut her eyes close.

"I will marry you, Eli."

{ \* }

"Finally the wedding's over and we can get a good rest." Emma commented tiredly.

"Yeah, you're right." Will nodded.

"Guys, I think you should know something." Bella said with a serious tone. "During the ceremony an unexpected guest showed up at the church."

"What are you talking about?" Lewis raised his eyebrows. "Who was it?"

"It was Rikki."

Cleo gasped covering her mouth with her hands.

"Are you sure?" Emma asked her.

"Positive." The other girl nodded.

"Poor Rikki." Will said. "I can't imagine how she must've been feeling watching the wedding."

Cleo's eyes filled with tears.

"I hope she's alright." She said.

Emma looked at her friend.

"Rikki's always been the strongest of all of us. I'm sure she'll be fine."

Suddenly an idea came up to Bella's head.

"Why don't we go and check on her. Sophie and Zane are off on a honeymoon and no one will find out."

"I don't know. It's dangerous." Emma hesitated.

"I'm with Bella!" Cleo stated, excitement audible in her voice.

"I also think it's not a bad idea." Will joined in.

Lewis nodded absent-mindedly and shared looks with Will. They knew they had to put their plan into action. For the girls' sake.

"So, it's settled then." Bella grinned. "We're meeting Rikki."

"I guess so." Emma nodded.

Bella's grin widened.

"Tomorrow."

End  
file.